

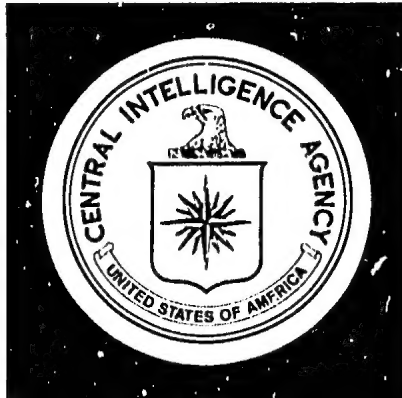
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Developments in Indochina

State Dept. review completed

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DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

(Information as of 1500)

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SOUTH VIETNAM

1

The fighting is generally light throughout the country. The road situation in Military Region 2 has improved, but Kontum City remains isolated and highway 20 is still blocked. The Communists may have made greater inroads in the delta than previously reported.

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[REDACTED] Govern-
ment officials are planning demonstrations against the Vietnamese Communist members of the Joint Military Commission when these teams begin to arrive on the scene.

NORTH VIETNAM

5

[REDACTED]
Several free world capitals are rushing to recognize Hanoi.

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LAOS

7

The government has abandoned Paksong and lost half of Muong Phalane. The Lao Communists may have direct air service from Vientiane to Sam Neua [REDACTED]

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CAMBODIA

9

[REDACTED] Sihanouk got his joint communique from the North Vietnamese, but it shed little light on prospects for a ceasefire in Cambodia. The insurgents are continuing their campaign against government positions east of the Mekong. Lon Non may have had something to do with the recent strike in Phnom Penh.

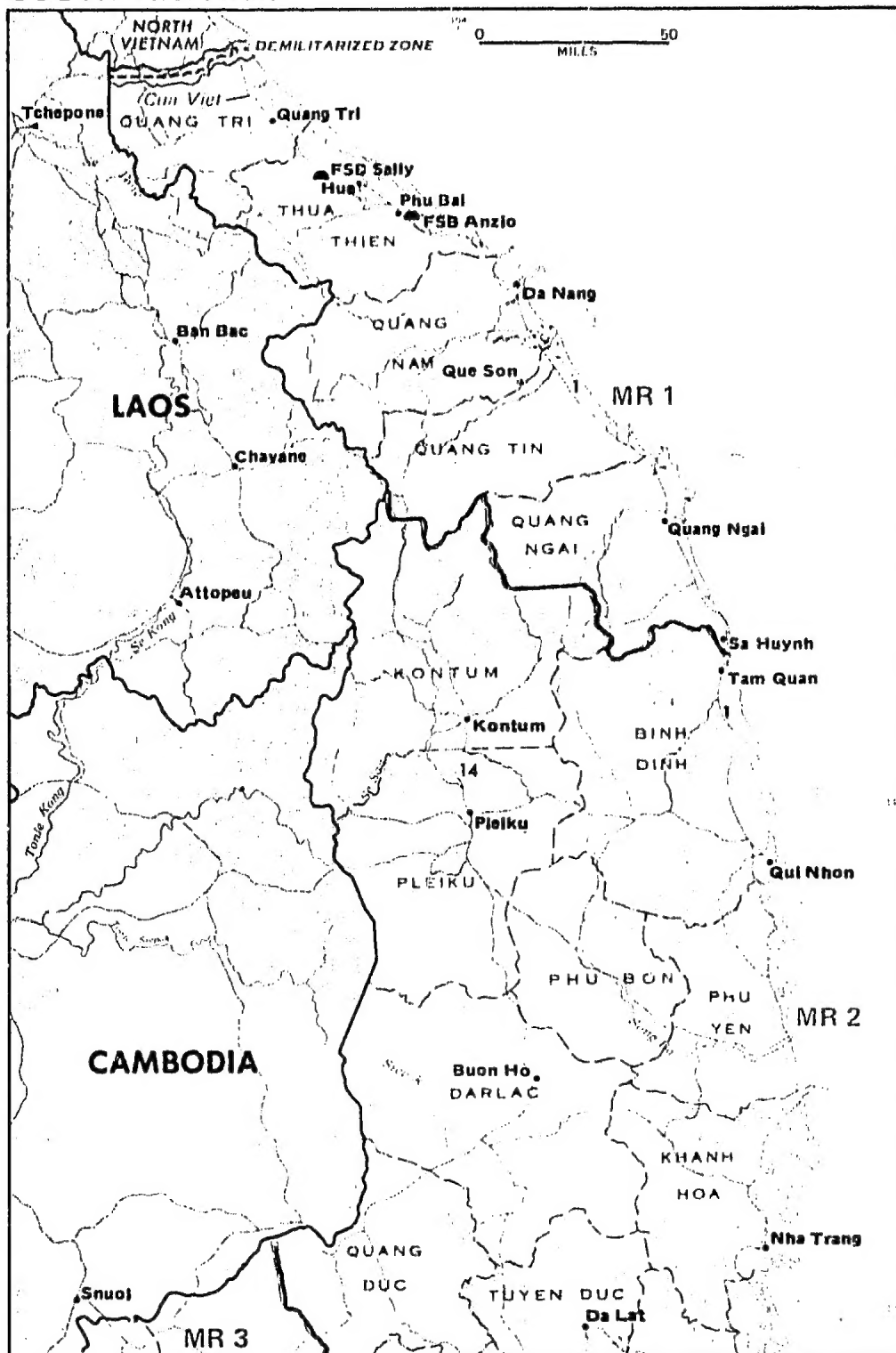
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SOUTH VIETNAM



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SOUTH VIETNAM

Fighting remains generally light throughout most of the country. Communist artillery units in northern Quang Tri Province are maintaining pressure on South Vietnamese Marine and Airborne units in an effort to keep government forces from consolidating their positions or conducting further operations to retake lost ground. Action in the rest of the northern provinces was at a low level, although the Communists continue to move units closer to population centers in the lowlands.

Government artillery bases around Hue report additional artillery strikes. The first reported use of 122-mm. artillery against South Vietnamese units at Fire Support Base (FSB) Sally north of Hue suggests that the Communists have moved some of their heavier guns closer to government defenses near Route 1. South of Hue, ground attacks against ARVN units at FSB Anzio are continuing--the North Vietnamese may be attempting to prevent ARVN reaction to the movement of more Communist units into the lowlands near Phu Bai.

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According to official US field assessments, government forces in southern Quang Ngai Province are trying to retake the area around Sa Huynh now controlled by the enemy. In view of the enemy's apparent resupply activities in this area, the Communists can be expected to offer stiff resistance to any efforts to push them out of their new foothold on the coast.

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[REDACTED]

The road situation in MR-2 has improved somewhat, but Kontum City remains isolated, and an emergency airlift is being readied to bring in needed food supplies. Route 14 remains cut south of Pleiku, seriously isolating several thousand people in Buon Ho District of Darlac Province. Highway 1 along the coast, however, is open the length of the region, and food from Da Lat is now being moved down Route 11 to Phan Rang and thence along Route 1 to Saigon; highway 20 remains blocked at the Long Khanh - Lam Dong Province border.

Action in the southern half of the country appears small-scale and localized, although there is evidence that Communist forces may have made greater inroads in some areas than previously reported. In Chuong Thien Province in the lower delta, the senior US military adviser reports that of the 168 hamlets in the province, those considered under Viet Cong control have increased from 25 to 53 since the beginning of the cease-fire. Only about 5 percent of the province's total estimated population of 280,000 live in these hamlets. The US official expects that when international supervisory personnel arrive, the Viet Cong will claim control over considerably more territory than is generally expected.

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Anti-Communist Demonstrations

Government officials have instigated the first major anti-Communist demonstration since the cease-fire agreement went into effect, and there are additional signs that agitation against the Communist members of the Joint Military Commission may be in the offing. Authorities in Quang Tin Province conducted a demonstration by some 10,000 people in Tam Ky on 8 February. [redacted] authorities in Da Nang plan to use refugees in the area to demonstrate against the Communists on the Joint Military Commission teams. The officials expect to score propaganda points by having to "rescue" the Communists from the South Vietnamese people.

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Government encouragements aside, there are indications that some demonstrations reflect genuine public discontent. A politician in Da Nang claims that resentment against the presence of the Communist delegates is "quite real" and not just a creation of government authorities. According to US officials in Pleiku, there is a real danger that bitterly anti-Communist refugees may throw rocks or otherwise agitate against any Communist delegations that arrive in the area. [redacted]

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NORTH VIETNAM

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Hanoi Gaining on the Diplomatic Front

A move to establish diplomatic relations with North Vietnam is gathering momentum. Canada's recognition of Hanoi on 7 February, as well as Australia's announcement that it has similar plans, is likely to be followed by other countries, particularly those in

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Western Europe. Italy, the Netherlands, and France are all seriously considering recognition. A British Foreign Office official said recently that London saw no need to recognize Hanoi immediately, but acknowledged that a "rush" to do so by other members of the European Community could influence Britain's own attitude.

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Hanoi, gratified by all this activity, almost certainly will raise no objections if countries seeking relations already have ties with Saigon, but the North Vietnamese clearly will not accept a lower level of relations than those already maintained with Saigon.

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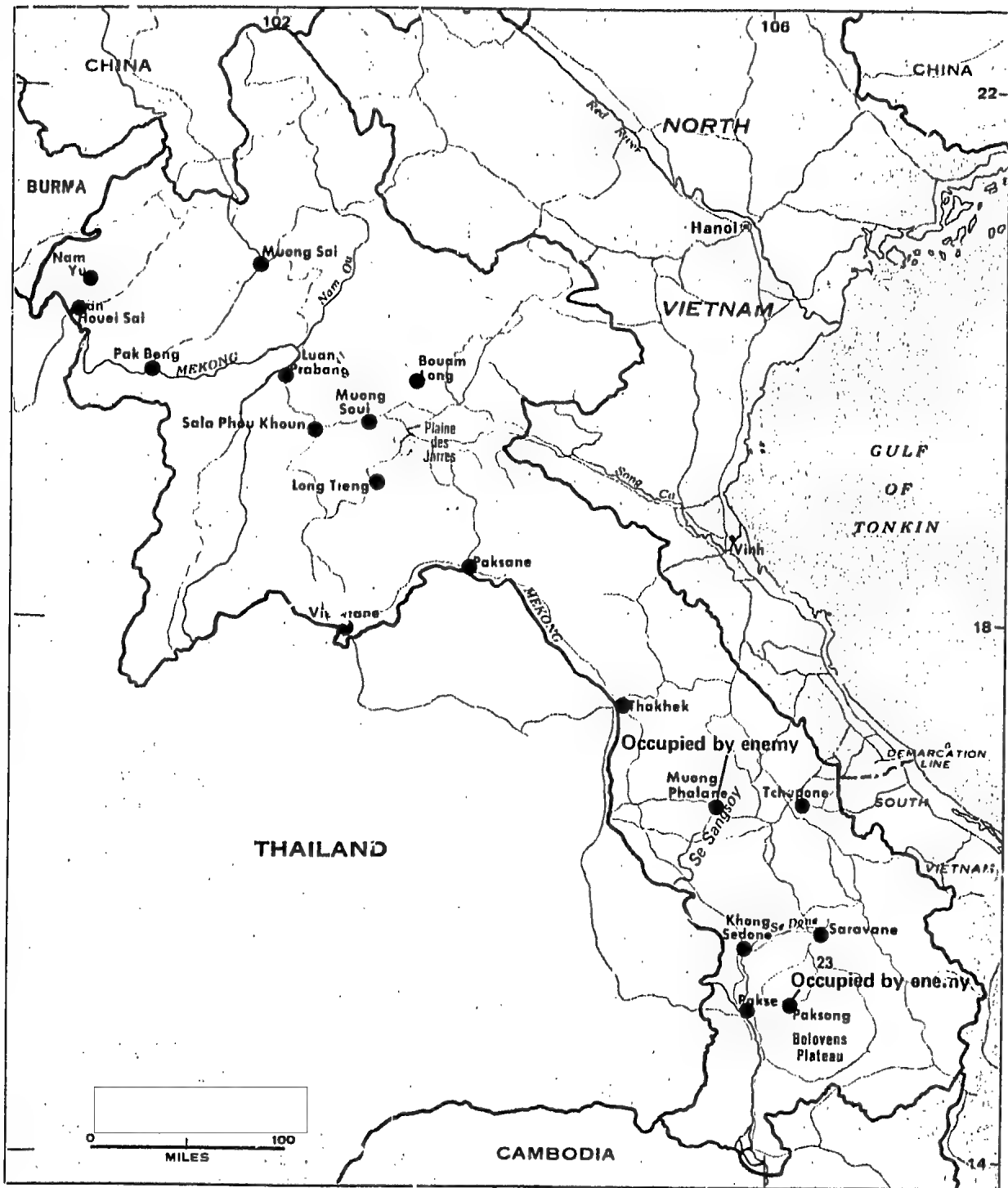
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LAOS



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LAOS

The government continues to suffer setbacks in southern Laos. Irregular troops on 8 February abandoned Paksong on the Bolovens Plateau in the face of heavy shelling and ground attacks. The attacks were apparently carried out by elements of the North Vietnamese 9th Regiment, which has been north of the town for several weeks. The loss of Paksong, once the commercial center of the fertile plateau, is a psychological blow to Vientiane. Government commanders are now attempting to set up new defenses along Route 23 west of the town and hope to keep at least a token government force on the plateau.

In the central panhandle, North Vietnamese troops moved across the Se Sangsoy on 8 February and occupied the western half of Muong Phalane. Government units still hold villages around the town, but they will probably fall back so that air strikes can be directed on enemy units in the relatively open ground around Muong Phalane. Air support will be of vital importance in the next few days if the government is to keep the North Vietnamese from making a concerted move toward Dong Hene.

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Most
of the 102nd Regiment, [redacted] remains near Saravane.

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Air Pathet Lao--A More Modest Proposal

The Soviets appear to have had second thoughts on their offer to provide the Lao Communists a jet transport for direct flights between Vientiane and Sam Neua, the Communist administrative center in the north. Instead, Lao Communist officials will wing to and from their headquarters on vintage Soviet bi-planes. [redacted]

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Of Sihanouk and Solidarity

The joint communique released in Hanoi on 6 February at the conclusion of Sihanouk's one-week visit to the North Vietnamese capital shed little light on prospects for a cease-fire in Cambodia. Just before he departed for his visit to Hanoi, Sihanouk indicated that he had some reservations about his impending discussions with the North Vietnamese leaders; he said that if the talks did not go well, there would be no communique.

A communique was indeed issued, and it gingerly sidestepped the gulf between Sihanouk's proposal on 31 January for a de facto end to the fighting and the Khmer Communists' determination to fight on. The North Vietnamese took the opportunity once again, however, to endorse Sihanouk as the only "legal" head of the Cambodian state. An editorial in Nhan Dan on 8 February presented a highly favorable treatment of Sihanouk's visit and noted that the communique "underscored the unanimity of the two sides on all the questions brought to discussions."

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The Military Situation

insurgent forces apparently are continuing to shell and direct ground

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probes against Cambodian units located between Banam and Neak Luong. No government positions in this area have as yet been lost to these actions. The insurgents are also keeping up probes against government positions just east of Neak Luong along Route 1. An insurgent rallier has claimed that three Khmer insurgent battalions from Svay Rieng Province are participating in the attacks in the routes 1 and 15 sector. South of Neak Luong, some insurgent elements are still operating along the east bank of the Mekong, but they made no effort to harass a supply convoy that moved up the river from South Vietnam to Phnom Penh on 8 February.

In the south, insurgent pressure against Route 2 has eased. The highway reportedly is again open between Phnom Penh and the South Vietnam border.

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Strike Post-mortem

The US Embassy reports that the origins of the short-lived general workers' strike in Phnom Penh earlier this week remain unclear. Minister of Labor and Social Welfare Thach Chia has told embassy officers that he believes the strike was politically motivated and aimed at forcing the resignation of First Minister Hang Thun Hak's government. Although Chia did not say who was behind the unrest, he probably had Brigadier General Lon Non in mind. Lon Non has a particular reason to move against Chia. Lon Non has been attempting to gain control of Chia's refugee program.

[REDACTED]

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Although the "Workers' and Peasants' Union" that led the strike has been dissolved, its leaders are now denouncing Lon Nol and the government in even stronger terms than during the strike. This attitude suggests they may try to renew their agitation at a later date.

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